Loudoun County Government Reform Commission
Memorandum

To: Mr. Eric Hornberger, Chairman, Loudoun County Public School Board
Ms. Jill Turgeon, Vice-Chairman, Loudoun County Public School Board

From: Loudoun County Government Reform Commission

Subject: Observations Concerning Year-round Schools

Date: July 6, 2012

Following-up on our commitment to inform the School Board of relevant findings, we are pleased to provide this memorandum concerning Year-round Schooling (YRS). Our review of this matter has been based on looking at ways to mitigate the downside risk associated with capital planning and debt service. Obviously, school construction has been and will remain a major use of capital funds. Therefore, the question arose as to whether YRS could reduce capital requirements associated with school construction.

In this document we provide a high level summary of key issues related to the impact of YRS:

a) politically and historically,
b) on educational outcomes,
c) on the community, and
d) on County finance.

We do not purport to provide an exhaustive review of the subject, but we do hope to provide a meaningful starting point for your own evaluation.

Executive Summary

- Far from a new issue, YRS have been part of the national landscape for decades and are in broad use across the nation. Were Loudoun to pursue this option, we would have no shortage of benchmark jurisdictions, some of which have been more successful than others. Therefore, Loudoun would be able to assess and mitigate implementation risks.
- YRS impacts not only cost, but also educational quality. As part of this Commission's mission we undertook not only to look for efficiencies (e.g. cost savings), but also qualitative improvement. Our high-level research into YRS leads us to conclude that such a program could have a positive qualitative impact, in addition to certain financial benefits. Therefore, Loudoun should not view this as a question of savings at the expense of quality, but potentially a dual benefit.
- We expect that any implementation would rely on an opt-in program, based on our review of other jurisdictions. It seems that in any community YRS will fit some citizens and educational

professionals, but not others. The difference seems to come down to individual family situations, matters of lifestyle, and educational preferences. Other jurisdictions have managed this successfully by allowing parents to choose YRS (or not) and we theorize that Loudoun could do the same.

- Based on increased utilization of capital assets by 33%, we believe that YRS have a tremendous positive impact on return on investment in school buildings.

Therefore, the Government Reform Commission recommends that the Loudoun County School Board evaluate the impact of year-round schools on capital requirements and evaluate the practicality of establishing an opt-in year-round school program.

Political/Historical Landscape

Given the tremendous volume of data available on the subject, we provide this background as a high level summary of key findings. Further, one must recognize at the outset of any discussion of YRS that it elicits very strong opinions for and against. In any event, however, one can rationally conclude that YRS offers enough total benefit that it has stood the test of time (as well as spirited attacks) to remain part of the United States public educational landscape for the long-term.

- YRS have been part of the public landscape for decades. Indeed, even one of the most publicly vocal opponents (Bussard, report available at www.summermatters.com), traces its antecedents back 100 years.

- YRS is already in widespread use (see attached map as of 2007, source: NAYRE). According to the Department of Education there were 2.5 million YRS students by 2008 and "education groups" estimate 5.0 million or 10% by 2012 (source: MSNBC 10/27/2010 attached).

- YRS elicits strong opinions for and against, as well as differing outcomes in the long term.

    - As a symptom of the strong opinions, we note that organizations exist simply to promote it (e.g. NAYRE) and to oppose it (e.g. Summer Matters). One has no trouble finding support for one side or the other of the proposition.

    - As an example of a negative outcome, one can certainly cite the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Implementation began in 1974 and peaked in 2002. Due to a number of complaints of disparate impact, of which the plaintiff claimed YRS was a part, the *Williams* case led to the dismantling of YRS in LAUSD by 2012 (for a summary see attachment by Woestehoff).

    - As an example of a positive outcome, Wake County, North Carolina implemented YRS in 1989 and concluded by 1996 that YRS had a positive impact on education levels ((see attachment by Prohm/Baenen). Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) remains committed to YRS for 2012 and beyond (see attached information published by WCPSS, including historical timeline). One must note that a difference between LAUSD and

WCPSS has been the element of choice presented by WCPSS (i.e. parents are able to opt-in or opt-out of the YRS program).

- Despite controversy, jurisdictions such as Chicago and Indianapolis have recently opted for YRS, indicating that even in an urban setting they saw benefits to overcome results in LAUSD.

- Even in places (e.g. CA) where there have been some set-backs amidst widespread adoption, YRS remain a very visible alternative promoted by the state Department of Education (see www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/yr , and "Year-Round Education Program Guide" attached).

- YRS have been a highly political issue driven by policy in the executive branch at the Federal and State levels. One can find support from both ends of the political spectrum (e.g., current Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is a supporter as was Governor Jeb Bush of Florida). This policy support has spurred both opposition and adoption.

Educational Impact

With much scholarship available on YRS, one finds many studies purporting to observe an empirical basis for a positive educational impact. In general, much of this positive impact pertains to avoiding the "summer learning loss" (Evans), which is most pronounced in the socio-economic disadvantaged (Entwisle/Alexander). In general, however, one must take the caveat that one cannot find the proverbial smoking gun to make the empirical case that YRS *per se* has a substantial positive impact in all implementations, although one finds many studies that purport to indicate such an impact in any particular implementation. We expect, therefore, that outcomes will be quite dependent upon implementation, as the real world examples of LAUSD and WCSS illustrate.

We do recommend two secondary articles (surveys of primary research) for your consideration, both of which we drew upon in our own research:

- *Year-round Schooling Brief* published by Indiana University School of Education (copy attached)
- *Year-round Schooling,* Education Week, August 2004

While neither of these articles states a conclusive case for YRS, each does a good job of defining different kinds of YRS programs, as well laying out the available primary research on the subject.

Worth noting is that, as presented by these articles, the bulk of research seems to indicate a positive impact on educational outcomes as a consequence of YRS, though the question seems to be to what degree and which type of YRS. To be sure, some research purports to find a negative outcome, but most research seems to indicate that YRS outcomes are at least as positive as traditional outcomes. One must, however, take the caveat that the surveys of such research state the overall situation as inconclusive.

Pros

- Less likely to incur summer learning loss, according to some research

- Positive impact on economically disadvantaged individuals, according to some research

Cons

- Lack of proven educational benefit across implementations

Community Impact

YRS frequently draws a gut level negative reaction from parents and teachers alike. However, significant research exists to the effect that "it is clear that the students, parents, and staff that participate in modified calendar programs are overwhelmingly positive about the experience" (Cooper et al, 2003). Looking at the abundance of actual commentary available on line, one quickly sees the following in terms of community impact:

Pros

- Some families prefer the flexibility offered by YRS
- Some faculty prefer the enhanced compensation opportunity offered by YRS

Cons

- Some families have difficulty adjusting to the scheduling of YRS
- Some faculty find the schedule inconvenient and challenging

We expect that Loudoun stakeholders would have deeply held preferences based on their own personal/family situations. Therefore, we would expect that a voluntary aspect to YRS would be critical in Loudoun, as it has been in WCSS. As a corollary, we think that YRS would actually be a service level increase in Loudoun based on offering broader education choice to the stakeholders.

Financial Impact

School construction costs not only have a dramatic effect on the County balance sheet, but also elicit strong opinions from citizens. Further, we must take into account the following as it pertains to Loudoun's financial situation:

- We live in a generally uncertain financial time. The systemic, political, and geopolitical threats to the solidity of our financial system remain abundant and consistent. We cannot simply expect a favorable financial environment over the long-term.

- With regard to Loudoun and our dependence upon the Federal budget, we must face the short term risk of sequestration and longer term risks of budget cuts that could have a significant adverse impact on our overall financial status.

- New GASB rulings regarding pensions could have a significant impact on how we disclose and analyze our actual debt structure.

- Regardless of our own fiscal responsibility, we cannot avoid broader impact from the Federal debt crisis, which will likely flow down to the state and local level over time if the Federal government must cut or reduce service levels.

- We cannot rely fully on our own debt service projections. By way of example, if the current five year plan were to be as incorrect in 2017 as the 2007 five year plan actually was in 2012 (compared to the 2007 projection), then we will not be able to sustain the currently projected level of debt.

- Finally, we can look at the example of numerous other jurisdictions that experienced rapid growth of school enrollment for a period of time, only to see the trend reverse according to the rules of population demographics. Those jurisdictions have found themselves with un-needed buildings (originally constructed to the standard of decades of use) that become merely a cost with no ongoing benefit. Loudoun could sink hundreds of millions of dollars into schools, only to find them empty in a generation's time. While short term needs must be met, we should be careful with our long term planning to minimize building depreciable assets that will not serve their full lives.

All of this dictates that we take an approach to School construction that optimizes our flexibility and minimizes upfront capital expenditures. YRS provides a tangible solution in this regard, without sacrificing anything in terms of quality of construction.

As implemented in WCSS, for example, YRS provide 33% more capacity per building utilized. Few decisions could rival the adoption of YRS in terms of sheer return on investment to the Loudoun community. As well, the adoption of YRS provides a hedge to the downside risks posed by the broader economic environment. Were we to have such a program in place, then it could be expanded in the event that circumstances required such a measure.

We should point out that certain operational costs per facility may actually increase as a result of YRS, though these costs would be spread across a larger number of students. By way of example, operating a facility 12 months per year will certainly tend to increase maintenance and utilities. However, given: a) the amortization of these costs across a larger number of students served annually, b) the reduction in debt service costs, and c) the reduction in absolute debt levels, we expect a positive overall outcome.

In conclusion, we re-state the recommendation that the Loudoun County School Board evaluate the impact of year-round schools on capital requirements and evaluate the practicality of establishing an opt-in year-round school program. We would appreciate the opportunity to brief the Joint Board of Supervisors/School Board Committee on this issue in September.

c: Members of the Loudoun County School Board
Members of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
Edgar Hatrick, Superintendent, Loudoun County Public Schools
Tim Hemstreet, County Administrator
Julie Grandfield, Assistant County Administrator

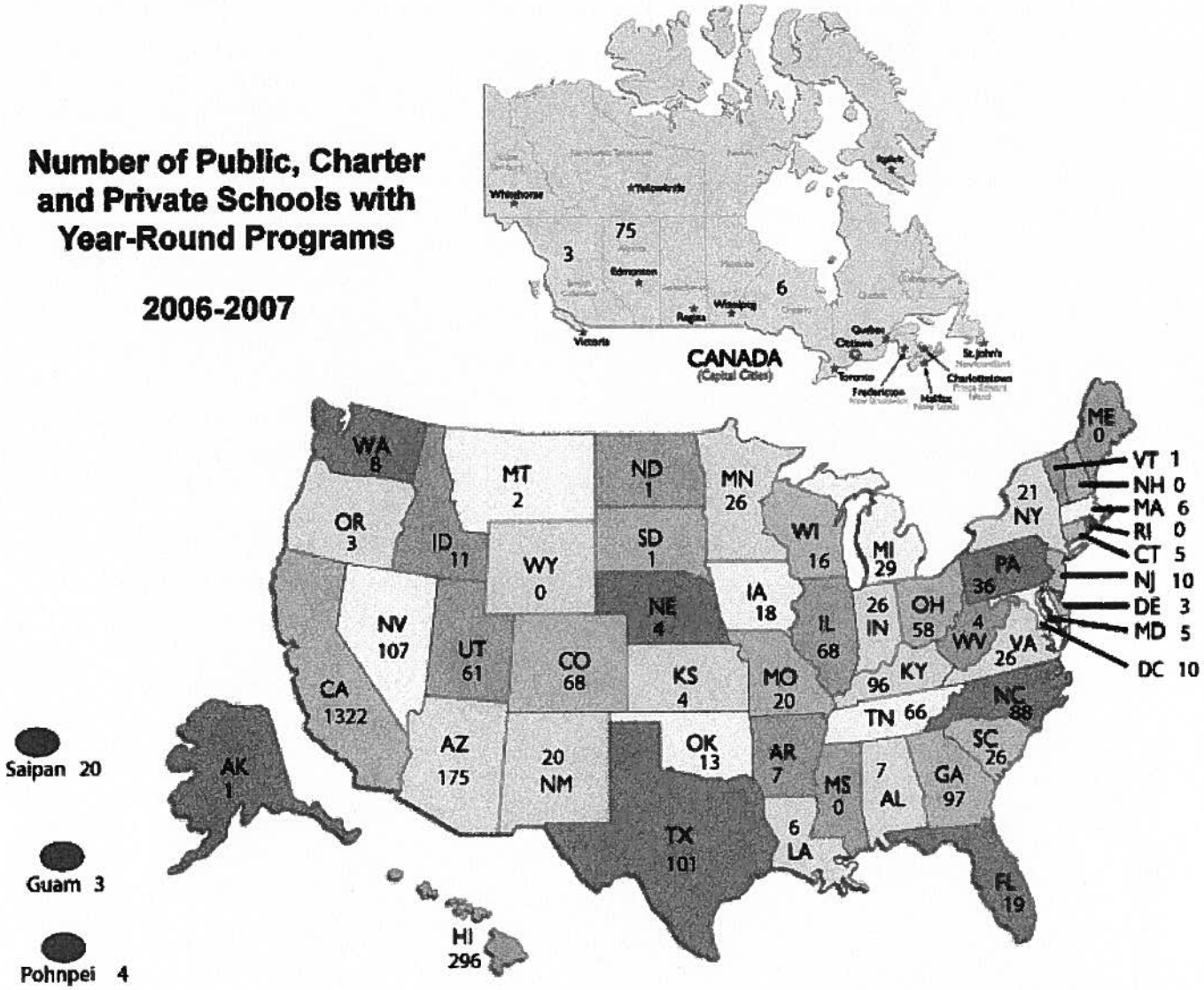
Attachments:

1 - "Number of Public, Charter and Private Schools with Year-Round Programs" Map
2 - "Year Round Schools Gain Ground Around U.S.", MSNBC
3 - "School Overcrowding and Multi-Track Year-Round Schedules", Los Angeles Unified School District
4 - Wake County Public School System information and timeline
5 - "Year-Round Education Program Guide", California Dept of Education
6 - "Pros and Cons of Year-Round Education", Indiana University School of Education
7 - "Year-Round Schooling", Education Week, August 2004

Return to NAYRE Home Page

Number of Public, Charter and Private Schools with Year-Round Programs

2006-2007



Source: NAYRE

ATTACHMENT 1

Year-round school gains ground around U.S.

By M. Alex Johnson Reporter msnbc.com
10/27/2010 6:13:04 AM ET

MSN.com

Two days before Thanksgiving, the Indianapolis School Board will make a decision sure to heat up discussion around the turkey in just about every home with young children. That's when board members will vote on whether to adopt year-round classes.

If the board approves the measure, Indianapolis pupils would go to school in cycles of eight to 10 weeks, with three to five weeks off after each, throughout the year. That would put them among the growing number of children around the nation who are going to school on so-called balanced schedules.

Indianapolis Superintendent Eugene White said the schedule would add 20 class days every year, giving pupils more time to learn and shorter periods away from the classroom to forget what they've studied. For both teachers and students, the shorter but more frequent breaks will "give them some kind of relief and (allow them to) come back more invigorated," he said.

That's important in a district criticized for low standardized-test scores and high dropout rates, said board member Annie Roof, because "what we are doing isn't working."

1. Only on msnbc.com
    1. Autistic boy's dad: Why hasn't teacher lost job over 'bullying'?
    2. Report: Bin Laden's widows, kids headed to Saudi Arabia
    3. Poisoning trees to make billboards visible
    4. Gay mom upset after dismissal by Boy Scouts
    5. Unborn baby shot in Los Angeles riots: 'I'm still here'
    6. High schools crack down on revealing prom gowns
    7. Your next car may have that Chinese touch

1. An msnbc.com-NBC News special report

    Alex Johnson is a reporter for msnbc.com. The following NBC stations contributed to this report: KARE of Minneapolis, Minn.; KSNV of Las Vegas; WETM of Elmira, N.Y.; WMAQ of Chicago; WNYT of Albany, N.Y.; WPSD of Paducah, Ky.; and WTHR of Indianapolis.

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10 percent by 2012?
If the board approves, Indianapolis will hop on a bandwagon that's quietly rolling across the education landscape.

Ten years ago, according to Education Department statistics, about 1.5 million public school children went to class on a "balanced schedule" — usually shorthanded as YRE, for "year-round education."

ATTACHMENT 2

Six years ago, that number was up to 2 million. By 2008, nearly 2.5 million pupils were on a YRE plan.

1. More U.S. news
    1. Gay mom upset after dismissal by Boy Scouts
    2. Autistic boy's dad: Why hasn't teacher lost job over 'bullying'?
    3. Unborn baby shot in Los Angeles riots: 'I'm still here'
    4. New report of Secret Service debauchery
    5. Remains in creek likely boy who was starved to death

That's the last year for which official figures are available, but since then, some of the nation's biggest districts have adopted or expanded YRE in their facilities, notably the Chicago Public Schools, and others — including Houston and Indianapolis — could join them next year.

By 2012, education groups estimate, more than 5 million pupils — about 10 percent of all children enrolled in American public schools — could be going to school year-round.

In Chicago, the drive to adopt YRE was championed by Arne Duncan during his term as the school system's chief executive. Duncan is now President Barack Obama's education secretary, and his boss is behind the campaign for year-round learning.

"The idea of a longer school year, I think, makes sense," Obama said in an interview last month on NBC's TODAY. "Students are losing a lot of what they learn during the school year during the summer."

The phenomenon is called "spring slide," a term coined by Doris R. Entwisle, Karl L. Alexander and Linda Steffel Olson of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, who have tracked Baltimore schoolchildren since 1982 and have been publishing their findings since 1997.

Challenging some prevalent assumptions, they reported in 2007 that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds make just as much progress during the academic year as better-off children. On standardized reading comprehension tests, students improved by about 195 points regardless which socioeconomic background they come from, low, middle or high, the researchers found.

1.

But in the summer months, kids in the top third economically kept gaining, picking up on average 46.6 points on the reading test. It was a dramatically different story for the less-privileged two-thirds: Kids the middle group gained about 4.5 points on average, while those in the bottom third lost 1.9 points. (Other research has shown similar, though less dramatic, trends in math and science.)

'We don't have them here enough'

Put another way, well-off children — those with access to tutoring and academic camps and travel — keep learning when school's out for the summer, while those without such advantages tread water or even sink.

In Indianapolis, the difference is clear in the small number of schools that are already year-round, said Margaret Silk, a fourth-grade teacher at one of them, Ernie Pyle Elementary School. There, 70 percent of students from low-income families pass their state assessment tests, higher than the Indiana average for all students and well above the average for lower-income students.

Silk said that under the traditional calendar, it took six weeks of reviewing the previous year's lessons just to get her students back up to speed.

"In this calendar, oh, my goodness, (it takes) maybe two weeks at most," she said.

- Vote: Do you support a longer school year?
- Read more reports on Education Nation

Natasha Flowers, an assistant education professor at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, said the year-round classes make a significant difference to children who are at the most risk — those from families that "don't have resources to do lots of academic enriching during the summer."

That's especially important as the federal No Child Left Behind program requires kids to master more material by the time they graduate. Educators like Mike Ginalski, superintendent of schools in Corning, N.Y., say it's getting harder to "cram all of the curriculum in basically a nine- to 10-month period of time."

"There are children that can always benefit from more time and more support that they receive daily in school," Ginalski said.

So why isn't year-round education taking root even faster?

For one thing, it's not just pupils who don't like the idea of sitting in class all day in the middle of summer. Public opinion polling has consistently shown that a majority of American adults oppose mandatory summer classes, too.

The most recent poll, by Rasmussen Reports in July, found that adults opposed a year-round calendar by 63 percent to 31 percent — about the same ratio as other surveys taken in recent years. (The Rasmussen poll reported a margin of sampling error of 3 percentage points.)

Specifically, 71 percent of adults — parents and non-parents alike — said in the most recent poll that children learn valuable life lessons during long summer breaks, by going to camp or by taking temporary jobs. And at public hearings recently in Indianapolis, some parents complained that summer classes would complicate their family vacation plans.

But the big objection boils down to this:

"Show me the money," Randy J. Greene, superintendent of schools in Paducah, Ky., said when the idea was raised there after Obama's comments last month.

Year-round buses and lunches and after-school tutoring programs cost more, Greene said, and parents are already unhappy about a 4 percent increase in propertytaxes to cover the $300,000 cut in state funding that hit the district this year.

The cost concern is playing out differently in Las Vegas, where the Clark County School Board — facing a $30 million shortfall in its budget thanks to reduced state funding and declining propertytax revenue — voted in April to abandon a year-round calendar and return to the traditional three-month summer break. The new calendar was projected to save the district about $13.8 million.

1. Only on msnbc.com
    1. Autistic boy's dad: Why hasn't teacher lost job over 'bullying'?
    2. Report: Bin Laden's widows, kids headed to Saudi Arabia
    3. Poisoning trees to make billboards visible
    4. Gay mom upset after dismissal by Boy Scouts
    5. Unborn baby shot in Los Angeles riots: 'I'm still here'
    6. High schools crack down on revealing prom gowns
    7. Your next car may have that Chinese touch

Marcie McDonald, principal of Squires Elementary School, said she understood that the board had to try to balance its smaller budget. But she said doing so would come at a real cost.

Ninety-two percent of McDonald's pupils are Latino, and for two-thirds of them, English is their second language.

"Our little ones are learning language," McDonald said. "They go home and listen to their primary language of their home for three months and come back. And having not used English for three months — that poses another concern or problem."

School overcrowding and multi-track year-round schedules

Brief overview presented by Julie Woestehoff, Executive Director
Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE)
312-491-9101 pure@pureparents.org

June 25, 2007

Legislative Hearing on the Overcrowding Crisis

Overview of select research submitted in support of plaintiffs in **Williams v California** case and related Chicago Public School issues.

The Williams case: In August 2004, the state of California agreed to settle Williams v. California, a landmark civil rights case which challenged the state to ensure quality learning conditions for millions of low-income students of color. The Williams settlement is an important victory for students, parents and their communities in California. It creates new ***standards*** for measuring whether schools have the ***basic conditions students need to learn*** such as textbooks, well-trained teachers and clean and safe school facilities.

Under the Williams settlement, California agreed to spend up to **$1 billion** in capital funds which will be added to the current **$14 billion** construction budget of the LA Unified School District.

The goal of the LAUSD's school construction program is to build enough schools to return all its students to neighborhood schools operating on traditional calendars.

The research papers cited in the next pages may be found at www.decentschools.com/whatsnew.php)

ATTACHMENT 3

Research for Williams case

A. Prof. Emeritus Glen I. Earthman, Virginia Polytechnic: **The Effect of the Condition of School Facilities on Student Academic Achievement.**

- Overcrowded schools have been found to be a negative influence upon student performance, especially for minority/poverty students. Students in overcrowded schools and classrooms **do not score as high on achievement tests** as students in non-crowded schools and classrooms. (p. 3, 12)
- Overcrowding results in **higher absenteeism** among teachers and students. (p. 12)
- Teachers report that overcrowding creates stressful and unpleasant working conditions, that these schools are noisier, create more non-instructional duties and paperwork, and **inhibit teaching and learning.** (p. 12)
- **Teacher burnout** is more common in overcrowded schools. (p. 13)
- 40% of students in overcrowded schools who were studied said they had **trouble concentrating** on their classes when learning something new; teachers in these schools said they only had time to cover the basics and **did not have time for further exploration.** (p. 13)

B. Prof. Jeannie Oakes, UCLA: **Multi-Track, Year-Round Calendar and Busing to Address Overcrowding**

- Multi-track, year-round education, which began as a stopgap effort to cope with severe overcrowding, has only **exacerbated the inequities** between and among California's schools. (p. 2)
- Multi-track schools **disproportionately enroll students of color.** (p. 6)
- Disadvantages of busing to relieve overcrowding include reduced parental involvement, incentive to skip kindergarten, limited access to after-school programs, and poorer academic performance. (p. 3)
- Multi-tracking is a (financial) response to overcrowding, not an educational innovation or reform. **"There's no school in California that would choose to do multi-track."** (pp.7-8)

Related CPS issues

7 out of 8 CPS schools on the multi-track system are predominantly Latino, Limited English-speaking, and low-income (see PURE Fact Sheet, "Discriminatory Impact of CPS Policy", attached)

Parents have staged a school boycott at Hurley, slated to go on multi-track July 2, 2007; the LSC and community are totally opposed to the schedule.

Oakes on Williams, *cont'd*

- In contrast, smaller class sizes have significant, measurable benefits that overcrowded classes do not: superior student academic performance, enhanced student-teacher interaction, increased personalization and individualized instruction, and less disruption. Studies show that the **positive benefits of smaller class size are even greater for disadvantaged and minority students**. (pp. 14-15)
- Multi-track calendars do not necessarily relieve overcrowding. (p.16)
- Multi-tracking can actually **exacerbate the negative effects of overcrowding**. Students classes are sometimes held in gymnasiums, libraries, and computer labs instead of classrooms as a result of overcrowding; these makeshift settings not only fail to provide adequate instructional spaces, but prevent other students from benefitting from the services those locations are designed to provide. Multi-tracking adds to that problem- with all classrooms in use during the regular school year, schools have no space to provide makeup or enrichment classes, test preparation, and other academic intervention programs. (p. 18)
- Research on school size indicates that student achievement is higher, along with attendance and graduation rates, while the rates of violence and disruptive behavior are lower, at small schools as compared to large schools. (p.18)
- Small schools are particularly beneficial for low-income students.
- **Tracking** can and does become explicit in multi-track schools as students and course offerings are clearly differentiated between tracks, such as one specific track for English Language Learners. (pp. 27-28)
- Students at multi-track schools cannot obtain summer internships and jobs or participate in seasonal sports or other extracurricular activities. (p.31)
- There is a **"painful" shortage of programs** to keep schoolchildren busy during non-summer vacations. (p. 32)
- Multi-track schools scored below predicted levels even after controlling for socioeconomic status.

Related Chicago issues, *cont'd*

CPS schools using the multi-track system remain overcrowded.

None of the tracks of the multi-track schedule offers the same opportunity for uninterrupted preparation for the ISAT exams as the traditional calendar. This puts students on the multi-track system at a disadvantage since the test is used to make promotion decisions. This is consistent with the experience of year-round schools across the nation (see PURE fact sheet: "Track schedules and the ISAT" and article on Nevada schools, attached).

Parents report that Track B at Hurley, which is to start July 2, will be "the bilingual track".

"B Track" Hurley students who were required to attend remedial summer school under the CPS promotion policy will only be able to attend for a week and a half and then will go back to Hurley to begin the "regular" school year.

Research for Williams case

C. Dr. Ross Mitchell, Gallaudet U.: **"Segregation in California's K-12 Public Schools: Biases in Implementation, Assignment, and Achievement with the Multi-track Year-round calendar**

- Found that Hispanic, English Language Learners, and low-income students were disproportionately represented in multi-track schools. (p. 5)
- Found that there were fewer fully credentials and more emergency credentialed teachers in multi-track schools as compared with traditional schools. (p. 6)
- "The multi-track calendar is independently associated with an additional achievement penalty" beyond individual student and family characteristics and teacher qualifications. (p. 6)
- Educational opportunity is curtailed for multi-track students since, for example, they do not have access to summer school. (p. 8)
- The multi-track calendar normally requires some grade combination classes which lower overall achievement and teacher morale. (p.8)

Related Chicago issues, *cont'd*

See PURE Fact Sheet, "Discriminatory Impact of CPS Policy", attached

See, additionally, "Hurley Elementary School: Oppose Multi-track Year-round Calendar", attached

WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

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WCPSS Home >> Newcomer >> Getting Started

What Are Year-Round Schools?

Families moving to Wake County will find that the Wake County Public School System operates 49 of its 156 schools on a multi-track year-round calendar.

More Year-Round Information

Frequently Asked Questions

Escuelas De Ciclo Continuo ("Year-Round Schools") - Preguntas Hechas Frecuentemente

Capacity Gain at Year-Round Schools

A Historical Perspective

What is a multi-track year-round calendar?

Students attending schools that follow the multi-track year-round calendar still attend school for 180 days, just like students on the traditional calendar. The main difference between the two calendars is the days that the students are in school and the days they have off for vacation.

Schools following the multi-track year-round calendar organize students into four groups or "tracks." Each track follows a different schedule. The schedules are staggered so that at any given time, three of the tracks are in school and one track is out on break. This system is a "45/15 Schedule," meaning the pupils are in school for 45 days, then off for 15, throughout the year.

The school year in a year-round school begins in early July for students on tracks 1, 2 and 3. Students on track 4 begin the school year 15 days later – when track 3 takes its first break. Year-round students have the same holidays as those on the traditional calendar.

As a result the of historic, rapid growth taking place in our system, the Board of Education has chosen to operate more schools on a multi-track system. Multi-track year-round schools are able to accommodate up to 33 percent more pupils in a building. For every three schools on a multi-track year-round calendar, one less school has to be built and equipped.

Families can use track-out time for vacation, or track-out can be used for additional learning. Some elementary schools offer intersession programs during track-out for pupils who are behind and need to catch up in their studies. Child care providers in our community offer child care during track-out.

Calendars for year-round schools (and traditional schools as well) can be found at http://www.wcpss.net/Calendars/.

How are families assigned to calendars?

In the past, multi-track year-round schools were considered magnet schools and families had to apply to attend. However, as the growth in the student population began to outpace Wake County's school construction program, the school system began utilizing the extra capacity afforded by schools on the year-round calendar to ensure that enough space was available for all the students moving into the system. In 2007, WCPSS converted 22 schools to the year-round calendar and agreed to open all new elementary and middle schools as multi-track year-round schools.

As a result, a family's assigned base school may now be a multi-track year-round school.

What options exist for families who want a different calendar?

Families in Wake County have many options. Families are assigned to a base school that may follow either the traditional or year-round calendar. Families have the option of applying for a transfer to another school that serves their grade level. There are also opportunities for families to apply to attend one of the system's innovative magnet schools. For information about your specific situation, contact your base school, the WCPSS Customer Service Center at 919-850-1600 or the Office of Student Assignment at 919-850-1921.

Wake County Public School System, 5625 Dillard Drive, Cary, NC 27518 | 919-431-7400

ATTACHMENT 4

WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL (WCPSS) SYSTEM
YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLS

WCPSS currently operates 49 of its 156 schools on a multi-track year-round calendar. Students on the multi-track year-round calendar attend school for 180 days which is the same for students on the traditional calendar. Schools following the multi-track year-round calendar organize students into four groups or "tracks." Each track follows a different schedule. The schedules are staggered so that at any given time, three of the tracks are in school and one track is out on break. This system is a "45/15 Schedule," meaning the pupils are in school for 45 days, then off for 15, throughout the year.

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Timeline for Year-round Schools:

1987-88 - Year-round concept proposed by the Wake County Manager and Stewart Adcock, chairman of the County Commissioners.

1988-89 – Task force developed year-round pilot school project.

1989- 2000 – Elementary and high schools converted to year-round programs (most schools are magnet schools)

1993-94 – Committee studied year-round concept to the high school level.

1999 – Citizens advisory committee was formed following the failure of a 1999 bond referendum to study the school system's capital needs and recommended a capital-spending plan acceptable to the board and to the public.

The Board of Education (BOE) approved PLAN 2000, a 3.5 year, $550 million building program which included expansion of the multi-track year-round calendar by one "module" consisting of 1 middle school and 3 elementary schools.

2001-02 – BOE voted not to convert an elementary and middle schools to year round programs and directed staff to study a longer term analysis .

2002-03 – Parents voted down 2 elementary schools' conversion to year-round calendar.

2003-04 – 2 elementary schools added to year round program.

2004-05 – 1 middle school and 2 elementary schools converted to multi-track year-round programs.

2005-06 – enrollment increases to 16,000 additional students in 3 years.

2006-07 – 17,174 students are in year-round schools. 5 elementary schools opened as multi-track year-round. Voters support bond referendum to convert 22 elementary & middle schools multi-track year-round for 2007-08.

WakeCARES (citizens group) filed lawsuit to stop conversion of schools to multi-track year-round.

2007-08 – 4 new schools opened as year-round, and 22 schools are converted from traditional calendar. There are 46 multi-track year-round schools in the county.

May 2007 - Judge Howard Manning, Jr. ruled that the WCPSS may not assign pupils to a calendar other than traditional without parental consent. The parents/guardians of pupils attending year-round or modified calendar schools were required to sign a consent form, or be assigned to a traditional calendar school.

WCPSS appealed to the NC Appellate Court to overturn it.

May 6, 2008, the Appellate Court rules in favor of WCPSS and WakeCares begins an appeal to the NC Supreme Court.

May 1, 2009 – In a 4-3 split, the NC Supreme Court upholds the decision from the Appellate Court by ruling that school boards have the statutory authority to assign students to year-round calendar schools without parental consent.

National Association for Year-Round Education conference

Contact:
James Overman, Senior Director for Elementary Programs – 919-858-3166

Reference: http://www.wcpss.net/newcomer/getting-started/year-round/

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ABSTRACT

The Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) (North Carolina) first introduced year-round education in 1989. By 1994, the program had expanded to seven elementary and middle schools. Of the seven current year-round schools, six have solely voluntary magnet enrollment and operate on a multi-track system. The other is a single-track year-round school defined by an attendance area, although parents can request a transfer in or out of the school. Evaluation of the voluntary, multi-track schools reported here has been based on academic achievement, student attendance, and staff and parent attitudes. Findings from 3 years of evaluation indicate that the voluntary, multi-track schools are at least as effective as schools on a traditional calendar, and that they appear to produce more positive student, staff, and parent outcomes in some areas. Student achievement at a multi-track school is generally above the WCPSS average and is at expected levels relative to similar students in other schools. Attendance at the multi-track schools is higher than the system average, and staff and parent attitudes are positive and higher than system elementary school averages. The data available indicate that creating more voluntary year-round magnet schools is a cost-effective way to serve more students. Two attachments present some responses of staff and parents to the evaluation surveys. (Contains nine figures.) (SLD)

ARE WCPSS MULTI-TRACK ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS EFFECTIVE?

Bethany Prohm & Nancy Baenen

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MULTI-TRACK SCHOOLS: EFFECTIVENESS SUMMARY

Voluntary, multi-track, year-round elementary schools generally appear to be at least as effective as schools on a traditional calendar. On some comparisons, multi-track schools appear to produce more positive student, staff, and parent outcomes.

- Generally, student achievement at multi-track schools is above the WCPSS average and at expected levels relative to achievement of similar students at other schools in the system.
- Attendance at multi-track schools is higher than the system average.
- Staff and parent attitudes at multi-track schools are positive and higher than system elementary averages.

Based on the data currently available, creating more voluntary year-round magnets has clear support as a cost-effective way to serve more students.

BACKGROUND

The Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) first introduced year-round education in 1989 at Kingswood Elementary School. The Kingswood program moved to Morrisville Elementary School for the 1991-92 school year. In 1992-93, Durant Road, West Lake, and Wilburn Elementary Schools and West Lake Middle School started as year-round programs. Durant Road incorporated a year-round middle school for the 1993-94 school year. In 1994, Oak Grove Elementary joined the school system as a year-round school. Thus, the program has expanded from one to seven schools.

Supporters of year-round education have suggested it is an attractive option because:

- It provides continuous education (i.e., shorter breaks) so students do not forget material during a long summer break;
- The three-week breaks make it easier to offer enrichment opportunities and remedial help for students during the school year;
- Teachers have planning time throughout the school year when it is needed most;
- It improves student attendance and lessens teacher and student burnout; and
- Parents have different scheduling opportunities for vacations.

In addition, year-round schools have helped WCPSS relieve overcrowding.

Currently, all year-round schools in Wake County operate using the 45-15 day schedule (nine weeks in school, three weeks out of school). Students in year-round schools receive the same number of instructional days (180) as students in traditional schools. Of the seven current year-round schools, six have solely voluntary magnet enrollment and operate on a multi-track system. This enables the schools to have 75% of the student population in school while the other 25% is on break, thus allowing the schools to serve up to 33% more students. Wilburn Elementary School, on the other hand, converted from a traditional school calendar to a single-track year-round schedule. The student body at Wilburn is defined by an attendance zone, although parents can request a transfer in or out of the school.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

WCPSS must consider whether to expand year-round programs to new or existing schools. Analyzing the effectiveness of current year-round schools can help in this decision-making process by addressing two questions:

- Do students in multi-track schools show achievement and attendance that are at least equal to or higher than those in traditional schools?
- Are the parents and staff of multi-track schools as satisfied with their schools as those in traditional schools?

This report will address these questions for the voluntary, multi-track schools started in 1992-93 or earlier (Morrisville, Durant Road, and West Lake). Three years of data concerning year-round student achievement, student attendance, and staff and parent attitudes toward school will be analyzed and compared to data from traditional calendar elementary schools. The single-track, year-round school (Wilburn) will be analyzed in a separate publication due to inherent differences from multi-track schools, such as the nature of the student bodies and the new buildings and voluntary enrollment in multi-track schools. (Wilburn is an older facility converted to year-round.)

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS FOR 1994-95

Reviewing school characteristics provides context for the type of student bodies enrolled in multi-track schools compared to the average for all elementary schools in WCPSS. These characteristics include free and reduced-price lunch eligibility, special programs enrollment, and racial composition.

Compared to all elementary schools (92% of which use traditional calendars), the multi-track schools generally *had a lower percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, a higher percentage of students enrolled in special programs, a higher percentage of White students, and a lower percentage of Black students*. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Student Characteristics in 1994-95 Expressed as Percentages

School	Race			F/R Lunch	In Special Programs (not AG)
	White	Black	Other		
All Elementary Schools	**69.4**	**26.0**	**4.6**	**25**	**10.4**
Durant Road Elementary	79.2	17.6	3.2	11	12.8
Morrisville Elementary	86.7	8.8	4.4	6	15.8
West Lake Elementary	88.8	9.9	1.3	7	12.3

This pattern and these percentages were almost identical to those of 1993-94.

EOG RESULTS

Results on the End-of-Grade (EOG) tests are useful in providing data on year-round school achievement. EOG scores classify students in one of four levels. Students performing at Level III or Level IV demonstrate consistent mastery of grade-level subject matter and skills and are considered to be well prepared for the next grade level.

Compared to the spring 1995 average for elementary schools, multi-track schools generally had *a higher percentage of students scoring at Level III or Level IV on the reading and math sections of the EOG test*. (See Figures 2 and 3.)

Figure 2. Percentage of Students Scoring at Level III or Level IV on the Reading Section of the EOG for Spring 1995

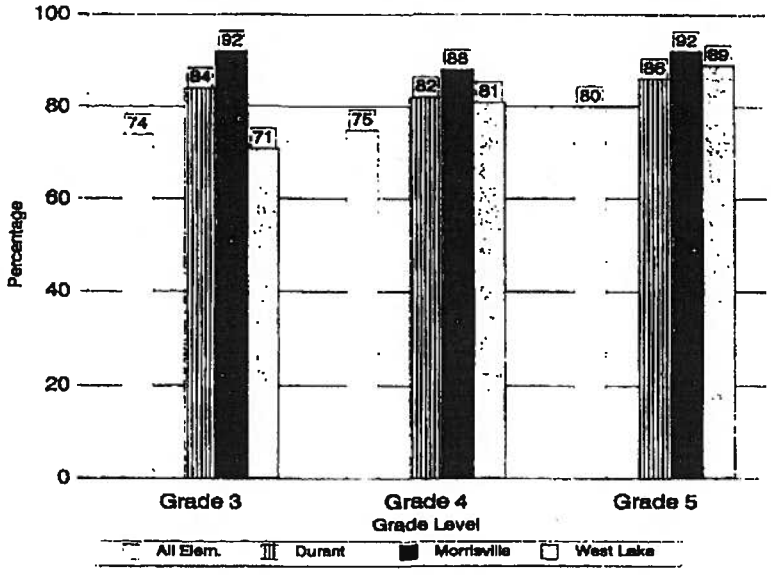


Figure 3. Percentage of Students Scoring at Level III or Level IV on the Math Section of the EOG for Spring 1995

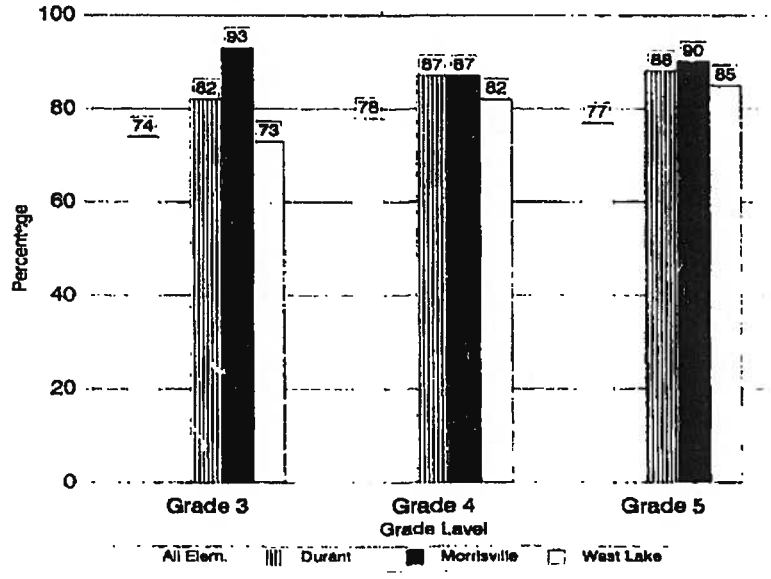


Figure 4 reveals basically the same pattern over the last three years, with the year-round schools generally exceeding the district percentages of students in Levels III or IV. If we examine the cohort of students who moved from 3rd grade in 1993 to 4th grade in 1994 and 5th grade in 1995, the year-round schools have remained fairly stable, while WCPSS overall has increased 6% in reading and 5% in math. The stable pattern at year-round schools probably reflects the fact that a high percentage of students in year-round schools scored at Levels III or IV initially (81%-91%). It probably does not reflect changes in students enrolled each year, because year-round schools have not experienced much attrition in their student bodies.

Figure 4. Percentage of Students Scoring at Level III or Level IV on the Reading and Math Sections of the EOG for 1993, 1994, and 1995

School	Grade	Reading			Math		
		1993	1994	1995	1993	1994	1995
All Elementary Schools	3	74	71	74	71	72	74
	4	74	77	75	77	78	78
	5	75	77	80	74	77	77
Durant Elementary	3	80	78	84	81	79	82
	4	68	86	82	79	86	87
	5	83	77	85	81	83	88
Morrisville Elementary	3	91	83	92	93	91	93
	4	77	89	88	90	92	87
	5	74	92	92	73	88	90
West Lake Elementary	3	90	78	71	89	78	73
	4	88	89	81	83	92	82
	5	82	91	89	85	88	85

Scale score changes are a more sensitive measure of growth across years. Figure 5 shows the average EOG scale scores for all elementary schools and the multi-track schools for 1993-95. Scale scores on a statewide basis generally increase by three to seven points by grade. In WCPSS, *students' scale scores from 3rd to 5th grade increased almost the same amount in the multi-track schools as the average for all elementary schools*. Specifically, the elementary students' average scale scores from 3rd to 5th grade (1993-95):

- Increased for the district by 9 points in reading and 14 points in math; and
- Increased in multi-track schools by an average of 8 points in reading and 14 points in math, and always remained higher than the scale score average across all elementary schools.

Figure 5. Spring 1993, 1994, and 1995 Scale Scores for Reading and Math

School	Grade	Reading			Math		
		1993	1994	1995	1993	1994	1995
All Elementary Schools	3	146	146	147	144	143	144
	4	151	151	151	150	151	151
	5	154	155	155	157	158	158
Durant Elementary	3	149	148	149	145	145	146
	4	151	153	153	150	152	153
	5	157	155	157	158	158	161
Morrisville Elementary	3	150	150	152	149	149	149
	4	153	154	154	154	155	154
	5	155	158	159	156	161	162
West Lake Elementary	3	149	147	146	147	145	144
	4	153	152	152	152	152	152
	5	156	157	157	158	160	160

EFFECTIVENESS INDEX

The Effectiveness Index is a method of comparing the achievement of students in a particular school with the achievement of similar students across the entire school district. Variables considered in the calculations include the prior year's achievement level of each student, each student's special education status, and a measure of socio-economic status. Achievement test scale scores are analyzed for all of the students in a school who take the EOG test and who also have an achievement or aptitude test score from the previous year. If schoolwide performance is similar to the performance in approximately two thirds of the other schools, the performance is labeled "Expected". If performance varies significantly, the performance is labeled "Below" or "Above" to indicate that achievement on the EOG tests was below or above what might be expected based upon the characteristics of the students in the school. Starting in the 1993-94 school year, the Effectiveness Index was based on the EOG rather than the California Achievement Test which is no longer administered.

Overall, year-round elementary students are performing about the same as similar students in other schools, with 14 of 18 ratings on the Effectiveness Index in 1994-95 at or above expected levels. Achievement performance by school varied somewhat as seen in Figure 6. At Morrisville, which has been operating the longest, student performance has remained basically the same since 1992-93, with students generally scoring at or above expected levels. Durant Road's performance has improved slightly since its first year (1992-93), with all ratings now at expected levels. West Lake's ratings, however, declined between 1993-94 and 1994-95, going from only one "Below" rating to four "Below" ratings. Reasons for this change may or may not relate to the year-round calendar and will be explored.

Figure 6. Effectiveness Index for the Multi-Track Year-Round Schools

School	Grade	1992-93		1993-94		1994-95	
		Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
Durant Road Elementary	3	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected
	4	Below	Below	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected
	5	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected
Morrisville Elementary	3	Expected	Expected	Expected	Above	Above	Expected
	4	Expected	Above	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected
	5	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected
West Lake Elementary	3	Expected	Below	Below	Expected	Below	Below
	4	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected	Below	Below
	5	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected	Expected

ATTENDANCE

Attendance rates are often cited as an advantage when comparing year-round schools to traditional ones. Multi-track schools had slightly higher attendance rates (an average of 0.7% higher) than the district average for elementary schools. (See Figure 7.)

These findings suggest that although multi-track students are in class during part of the summer months, *their attendance rates were slightly better than the traditional schools.* The 1992-93 school year showed similar patterns.

Figure 7. Attendance Rates for 1993-94 and 1994-95

Schools	1993-94	1994-95
All Elementary Schools	**95.9%**	**96.0%**
Durant Road Elementary	96.1%	96.5%
Morrisville Elementary	96.7%	97.0%
West Lake Elementary	96.4%	96.5%

PARENT AND STAFF ATTITUDES

Staff and parent surveys were used to assess school climate.

Compared to the elementary school district average:

- Staff at multi-track schools indicated a more positive attitude on 15 of 18 survey questions related to school climate and effectiveness.
- Parents at multi-track schools indicated a more positive attitude on 14 of 15 survey questions

related to school climate and effectiveness.

Compared to last year, staff results were stable on most items but fluctuated by 10% or more on 11 of 48 comparisons by school item (5 items increased and 6 decreased). Parent results were even more stable across years (1 of 33 decreased by 10%). (See Attachments 1 and 2 for more details.)

Figures 8 and 9 show the percentage of staff and parents who agreed or strongly agreed to survey items selected to compare the climate and effectiveness of the year-round schools with the elementary school district average.[1] Results indicate that both staff and parent responses were more positive for the multi-track schools than for the elementary school average.

Figure 8. Percentage of Staff Who Answered Agree or Strongly Agree to School Climate Items

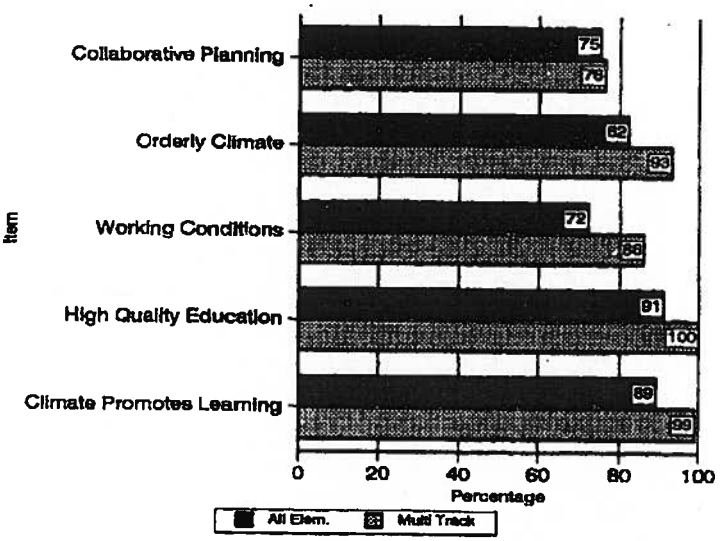
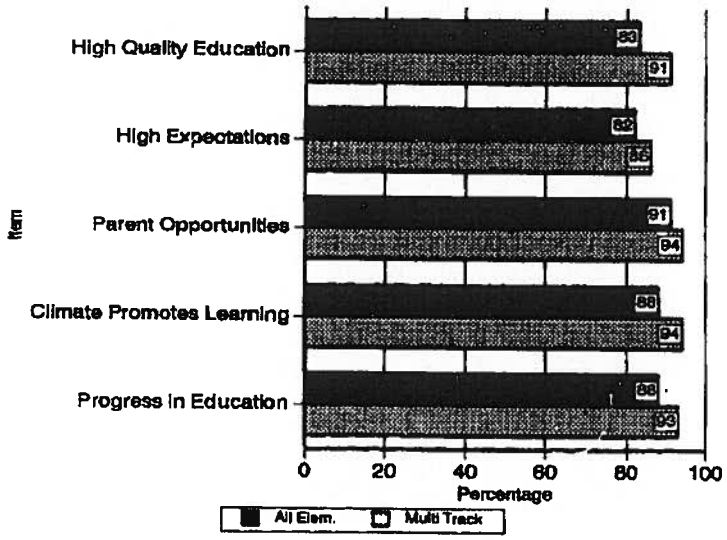


Figure 9. Percentage of Parents Who Answered Agree or Strongly Agree to School Climate Items



[1] Items in Figure 8 correspond to question numbers 3, 4, 7, 12, and 15 (starting from the top of the bar graph) on Attachment 1. Items in Figure 9 correspond to question numbers 4, 5, 10, 13, and 15 on Attachment 2.

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ATTACHMENT 1

Percentage of Staff Who Answered Agree or Strongly Agree to School Related Items for 1993-94 and 1994-95

Survey Item	All Elem.		Dumont Road		Morrisville		West Lake	
	1994	1995	1994	1995	1994	1995	1994	1995
1. Building facilities at my school are adequate to support the instructional program	60	64	87	95	83	74	94	88
2. My school has adequate instructional supplies to support the instructional program.	69	71	87	87	82	78	82	76
3. There is collaborative planning and decision making in my school.	75	75	80	76	67	72	81	80
4. Our school has an orderly and purposeful climate.	82	82	90	97	92	91	98	93
5. Our school building is well maintained.	76	70	87	46	94	96	91	64
6. This school is a safe place to work.	87	90	100	97	100	100	100	95
7. Our school maintains working conditions that attract and retain competent employees.	74	72	83	80	88	89	87	87
8. I feel encouraged to do things differently when I believe these changes will improve my school.	81	80	90	89	76	75	88	80
9. I have been active in the school improvement process at this school.	87	89	100	86	71	89	91	80
10. Training at our school supports implementation of our school improvement plan.	87	85	93	97	88	89	80	85
11. Our school improvement process will have a positive impact.	72	74	90	73	71	74	89	83
12. My school provides a high quality educational program.	91	91	90	100	98	100	96	100
13. The staff at my school have high expectations for all children.	84	84	97	97	94	95	90	85
14. This school promotes understanding among students from a variety of backgrounds.	NA	82	NA	89	NA	81	NA	73
15. The climate at this school promotes children's learning.	NA	89	NA	97	NA	100	NA	100
16. Students who threaten or fight with teachers are not a serious problem at this school.	72	71	93	92	77	88	92	82
17. Students who threaten or fight with other students are not a serious problem at this school.	62	62	80	87	68	81	88	82
18. My school provides sufficient opportunities for parental involvement.	94	94	97	100	100	100	90	100

Note: Highlighted a percent differences from previous year of at least 10%

EDRS

ATTACHMENT 2

Percentage of Parents Who Answered Agree or Strongly Agree to School Related Items for 1993-94 and 1994-95

Survey Item	All Elem.		Durant Road		Manzanilla		West Lake	
	1994	1995	1994	1995	1994	1995	1994	1995
1. My child's school is a safe place to learn.	91	92	99	98	97	98	97	97
2. My child's school grounds are clean and attractive.	90	89	97	90	98	95	93	83
3. My child's school building is clean and attractive.	NA	91	NA	99	NA	99	NA	98
4. My child's school provides a high quality educational program.	83	83	93	93	91	89	92	91
5. The staff at my child's school have high expectations for my child.	83	82	92	90	88	85	88	85
6. My child is academically challenged in all classes.	69	69	80	77	75	70	75	71
7. It is easy to contact the staff at my child's school.	90	89	90	92	94	92	88	91
8. When I have concern about my child, I can count on the school for support.	80	79	83	83	84	80	84	84
9. I feel comfortable visiting my child's school.	95	94	97	95	99	97	92	96
10. My child's school provides sufficient opportunities for parental involvement.	94	91	97	96	98	95	94	92
11. I am informed about my child's progress on a regular basis (in addition to report cards).	92	90	91	86	94	88	89	88
12. If I call the school, I receive prompt and courteous attention.	NA	87	NA	89	NA	91	NA	92
13. The climate at my child's school promotes learning.	NA	88	NA	96	NA	93	NA	93
14. Students at my child's school are well behaved overall.	NA	69	NA	83	NA	83	NA	79
15. I have seen progress in my child's education in the past 12 months.	NA	88	NA	93	NA	93	NA	92

Note: Highlighted are percent changes from the previous year of at least 10%

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Year-Round Education Program Guide

Introduction

Year-round education is not a typical alternative way to deliver the curriculum. It is, however, an alternative way to construct the school calendar. It may have positive effects on student achievement, especially for disadvantaged students.

Both traditional and some year-round school calendars can have 180 days of instruction. The traditional calendar, of course, is divided into nine months of instruction and three months of vacation during the summer. Year-round calendars break these long instructional/vacation blocks into shorter units. The most typical instructional/vacation year-round pattern is called the 60/20 calendar (60 days of instruction followed by 20 days of vacation; the second most popular is the 45/15; and the third, the Concept 6 (roughly 80 days of instruction followed by 40 days of vacation). There are numerous other possible patterns, but they are not common.

Year-round education is also known by the number of "tracks" it uses. A school using a "single track" year-round calendar is simply changing the instructional/vacation sequence of the school year; all the students and staff are in school or vacation at the same time. But a school using a "multitrack" year-round calendar does something quite different; it divides the entire student body and staff into different tracks (from three to five). If, for example, a school is using a four-track system, then at any one time three of the four tracks are attending school while the fourth is on vacation. The rotation sequence depends on the year-round calendar being used. In the 60/20 calendar, one track returns from vacation and one track leaves every 20 days.

The advantage of a multitrack system is that it expands the seating capacity of a school facility. For example, a school with a seating capacity of 1,000 could potentially enroll 1,500 if it uses a three-track system (each track having 500 students and one track always on vacation). The school's seating capacity has been increased by 50 percent. In practice, however, three-track plans typically expand the seating capacity by about 33 percent. If a school with a seating capacity of 1,000 uses a four-track system, it could potentially enroll 1,333 students, increasing its capacity by 33 percent. In practice, four-track plans typically expand the seating capacity by about 25 percent.

Incentive grants are available for school districts planning and operating multitrack year-round education programs. These grants are allocated annually based on the number of students claimed in excess of school site capacity. A disadvantage of adopting a multitrack system and collecting state multitrack operational grant money is that the school district's new construction entitlement in the State School Building Program is reduced by the number of additional students housed at a school as a result of its multitrack calendar.

Because of rapid growth, overcrowding, and the cost-effectiveness of year-round programs in achieving class size reduction, the number of districts using multitrack year-round education has grown significantly. In 1988 69 districts used year-round programs. By June 1997 more than 100 did so.

For many, however, the advantages of multitrack year-round education are compromised by the disadvantages. For instance, lengthening the school year beyond 180 days by using on-site classrooms is thwarted by the available-day limitations of each multitrack year-round education track. And offering mandatory remediation sessions, when all classrooms are used all year, is likewise a challenge. A district considering the implementation of multitrack year-round education must consider both its facility needs and its instructional objectives and then choose a course that provides each of its students with the maximum opportunity to learn.

The ability of year-round education to relieve overcrowding has overshadowed its effectiveness as an educational strategy. Yet there are, in fact, compelling reasons year-round education should be considered in its single-track form simply for its educational benefits, especially for at-risk students.

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Students with learning disadvantages may receive academic benefits. Student achievement scores improve when those students are attending year-round schools. 1 The explanation is simple: the loss of retention of information that occurs during the three-month summer vacation is minimized by the shorter, more frequent vacations that characterize year-round calendars. For those students without intellectual stimulation, enrichment, or reinforcement during the summer, summertime can be intellectually detrimental.

Also, summer school, the typical time for remediation in traditional calendar schools, is held just once a year. It is scheduled after the school year has been completed, which is often too late. Year-round calendars replace summer school with intersession (those periods of shorter vacations that punctuate the instructional year). Because intersessions take place more frequently, remediation can occur in sequence, offering to help a student in a timely manner.

Of course, there are other benefits associated with the year-round calendar: teacher and student stress are relieved by regular breaks throughout the year; vacation time can be used more creatively; and the curriculum can creatively incorporate seasonal

ATTACHMENT 5

learning.

Implementing a year-round education calendar has both facility and programmatic implications. In its multitrack and single-track forms, it can be an important strategy for ensuring that a district can deliver the best possible educational program.

Statistical Summary of Year-Round Programs, 2005-06

- School districts in California: 1,054
- School districts with enrollments greater than 1,000: 596
- Public schools in California: 9,553
- Total K-12 enrollment: 6,312,103
- School districts using year-round education programs: 156
- Total year-round K-12 enrollment: 1,188,115
- Public schools using year-round education programs (by grade level):
  - Elementary schools: 1,127
  - Middle/junior high schools: 146
  - High schools: 90
  - K-12 schools: 12
  - Altenative high schools: 21
  - Continuation high schools: 26
  - Opportunity schools: 4
  - Total: 1,426
- Single-track programs
  - Number of districts with single-track programs:* 112
  - Number of single-track schools: 740
  - Enrollment in single-track schools: 487,974
- Multitrack programs
  - Number of districts with multitrack programs:* 74
  - Number of multitrack schools: 690
  - Enrollment in multitrack schools: 700,141
- Year-round calendar plans used by schools (districts may use more than one calendar plan)
  - 45/15: 156
  - 60/15: 15
  - 60/20: 420
  - 90/30: 167
  - Concept 6: 99
  - Custom 573
  - Orchard: 0

:Districts may use both plans.

Source: CBEDS 2005

Year-Round Calendars

Characteristics	Traditional	45/15 Multitrack	Concept 6 Multitrack	60/20 Multitrack	90/30 Multitrack	Orchard
Number of tracks	1	4	3	4	4	5
Number of instructional periods	2 to 4	4	2	3	2	3
Length of periods	45 to 90 days	45 days	81 days	60 days	90 days	60 days
Number of instructional days	180	180	163	180	180	180
Length of vacations	3 days to 3 months	15 days	43 days	20 days	30 days	3 periods of 15 days each; 1 period of 20 days
Number of vacations	1 long	4	2	3	2	4
Maximum						

capacity gain (percent)	0	33	50	33	33	25
Features	Long instructional blocks, long vacation	Frequent vacations	Long instructional blocks, short school year	Long instructional blocks	Long instructional blocks, long vacation	Teachers and students on vacation at the same time

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Advantages	Single-Track	Double Session	Concept 6	Modified Concept 6	90/30	60/20	45/15	4 Quarters	60/15	5 Quarters
Increase school building capacity	0%	100%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	25%	25%
Provides for 180 days of instruction	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Breaks up three month traditional summer into two or more periods, enhancing continuity and pacing of instruction	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Provides multiple vacation options for students and staff	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Provides opportunities for salary enhancements through substitute and/or intersession employment	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Provides for a common three to four week summer vacation for all students and staff	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Provides multiple intersessions to accommodate enrichment and/or remedial instruction	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Offers maximum opportunity for course offerings in a departmentalized program	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
If space and funding allow, students may attend all four quarters	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Retains a calendar that accommodates two semesters or four quarters	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Requires fewer room changes, including start-ups and closing	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Allows teachers and students to retain the same classrooms all year	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Permits the addition of school days beyond the required 180-day school year	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Limits the school year to approximately 163 days, which are lengthened to meet state requirements for cumulative annual minutes of instruction			Yes	Yes						
Winter vacation is generally limited to one week			Yes	Yes						

Disadvantages	Single-Track	Double Session	Concept 6	Modified Concept 6	90/30	60/20	45/15	4 Quarters	60/15	5 Quarters
Requires class rotation or teacher rover			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Requires three more "start-ups" and "endings"				Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	
Requires additional storage space for teachers and students		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Requires a calendar that does not coincide with a traditional school year calendar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional demands placed upon cafeteria, custodial, maintenance, and instructional support and administrative services		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Student testing schedules will defer from track to track			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Graduations, parent conference days, annual music, athletic, and other events must be given specific accommodations			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No common vacation break of longer than three weeks for all staff and students			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Limits the school year to approximately 163 days, which are lengthened to meet state requirements for cumulative annual minutes of instruction			Yes	Yes						
Winter vacation is generally limited to one week			Yes	Yes						

Source: La Canada Unified School District Feasibility Study, 1998.

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Year-Round Costs

Areas of Savings

- Avoided costs - capital outlay; avoided extra-site operation and staffing, including classified, certificated, and administrative personnel, furniture, supplies and equipment, utilities and maintenance, and transportation
- Potential savings - additional average daily attendance (ADA) generated; shared materials (library, computer, audio visual, science resources, textbooks); benefits (calculated on a 12-month basis for most employees), reduced absenteeism (additional ADA and decreased requests for substitute teachers); and decreased vandalism
- Incentives - California Department of Education year-round education implementation and operational Grants

Areas of Costs

- Transition costs - administrative planning, staff development, communication, storage units, storage space, and air conditioning
- Operational costs - expanded office and administrative staff; increased utilities, maintenance, and transportation costs

Example Cost Analysis

Position/Cost Item	Enrollment of 500 Students		Enrollment of 581 Students		Enrollment of 635 Students	
Position	**Traditional**	**YRE**	**Traditional**	**YRE**	**Traditional**	**YRE**
Personnel/Principal	$67,000	$73,030	$67,000	$73,030	$67,000	$73,030
Personnel/Clerical Staff	$42,075	$50,490	$42,075	$50,490	$42,075	$50,490
Personnel/Noon aides	$7,751	$10,334	$7,751	$10,334	$7,751	$10,334
Personnel/Custodial Staff	$55,854	$59,576	$55,854	$59,576	$55,854	$59,576
Personnel/Fringe	$51,804	$58,029	$51,804	$58,029	$51,804	$58,029
Operational/Additional Facilities	$0	$0	$28,178	$0	$46,960	$0
Operational/Utilities	$34,546	$44,816	$36,562	$44,816	$40,578	$44,816
Operational/Supplies	$11,850	$11,850	$13,650	$13,650	$15,450	$15,450
Total cost	$270,880	$308,125	$302,874	$309,925	$327,472	$311,725
Cost per pupil	$542	$616	$521	$533	$515	$490

Model is based on a school site with a capacity of 500 students.
Source: La Canada Unified School District Feasibility Study 1998.

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Implementing a Year-Round Educational Program

A. **Implementation Steps**
1. Select schools and grade levels.
2. Establish a process for resolving issues.
3. Construct a "Pert Chart" for organizing issues, time lines, and responsibilities.
4. Meet consultation requirements (*Education Code* Section 37616) and November 1 public notice deadline (*Education Code* Section 37611) if needed.
5. Select and approve a calendar by working with employee groups.
6. Assess the need for facilities modifications, including shade modification and storage areas for off-track teachers.
7. Submit budget requests to district business office.
8. Decide if year-round education will be implemented on a voluntary or mandatory basis for students and employees.
9. Develop and approve a track preference and assignment policy for students, keeping in mind the need for same schedules for family members. Balance tracks by ethnicity, academic ability, socioeconomic level, and educational need.
10. Develop and approve a track assignment policy for teachers and staff.
11. Determine staff in-service schedule.
12. Institute a year-round education informational network for certificated and classified staff members and parents.
13. Send choices of tracks to parents by early spring.
14. Notify parents as soon as possible of track assignment.
15. Develop a policy and system for track-change appeals.
16. Develop a system for delivering services during the summer (e.g., classroom supplies and textbooks).
17. Modify/expand food services according to need.
18. Modify payroll periods.
19. Develop a system for plant maintenance and utilization of empty rooms.
20. Ensure that air conditioning and insulation are able to provide summer comfort.
21. Bargain with all appropriate classified and certificated units.
22. Develop a work schedule for office, custodial, and administrative staff members.
23. Develop a system to deliver electives and special services, such as special day classes, psychological services, resource specialists, and bilingual education.
24. Ensure appropriate cash reserves to meet summer payroll and supply expenses.
25. Modify transportation system as required, including routes, number of buses, and service schedules.
26. Establish a system for teacher room rotation or roving.
27. Develop a community-school communication system for notifying off-track families of important school dates and activities.
28. Provide activities for connecting off-track employees and parents.
29. Reschedule special events such as holiday programs.
30. Design attendance accounting system as required.
31. Modify report card schedule.
32. Coordinate with community services, such as the recreation department, youth organizations, church groups, and the police department.
33. Identify and coordinate with child care providers.
34. Identify intersession instructional programs and schedules.
35. Modify student testing program.

B. **Track Assignment Considerations**

General Axioms
1. Establish the following priorities in deciding who gets first track preference, of a track:
   a. Keep families together. Give priority to families with children in different schools in accord with *Education Code* Section 37617.
   b. Respect district employees and keep parents on the same track as their children.
   c. Respect the terms of divorce settlements by respecting parents visitation schedules.
   d. Consider unique family circumstances (e.g. predictable, annual visits of families located in different parts of the country or the world).
   e. Acknowledge unique educational opportunities (e.g., a cello prodigy who is offered a summer camp).
2. Use a fair, balanced track assignment policy once priorities have been honored. Each track should mirror the ethnic and socioeconomic composition of the entire school population.
3. Minimize ability and/or special education need track segregation. If a special population must be put on one track, isolation and segregation can be minimized by partial day integration of self-selection of track;
4. Develop an appeals process, including:
   a. A site administrator
   b. An appeal committee (made up of an administrator, a teacher and a board member)
   c. Full board
5. Do not:
   a. Load tracks by ability level.
   b. Load tracks by special groups (e.g., band or football).

c. Move students from track to track each year (unless requested).
d. Wait too long to announce track assignments.

C. **Operational Strategies for Special Services**

Special Day Classes

1. Typically confined to one track (or two if the population warrants).
2. Extended school year days are typically offered during intersessions.
3. *Education Code* Section 37617 allows exemption from placing students from same family on same track.

Resource Specialists

1. Typically offered on all tracks.
2. Teaching services stretched to 12 months:
   a. Increasing the number of teaching days per year
   b. Increasing the number of teaching weeks per year but keeping the number of teaching days the same. Vacation time is spread throughout the year and equally distributed across all tracks. Aides, roving RSP teachers, and/or substitutes fill in during vacation time.
   c. Increasing the number of teaching weeks per year but keeping the number of teaching days the same by converting contracts to four-day work weeks, with fifth-day coverage done by aides, roving RSP teachers, and/or substitutes; or limit services to four days per week.
   d. Increasing the number of teaching weeks per year while decreasing the number of per-teacher instructional days by sharing contracts.
   e. Increasing the number of teaching weeks per year by assigning the contract teacher to a specific track (or a "traditional" schedule) and filling in the vacation periods with a long-term substitute or roving RSP teacher.

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Pros and Cons of Year-Round Education Programs

Pros

- School site accommodates 20 to 30 percent more students.
- Students retain more of their learning.
- Teachers are able to earn more money if they choose to teach extra sessions or substitute.
- There is an increased public perception of teachers as professionals.
- There is a lower cost per student than the acquisition cost of site and building.
- Vandalism is reduced at school sites.
- Kindergarten students can enter when they are ready instead of waiting until September.
- Students may advance academically when they are ready if space permits.
- Intersessions offer time to supplement instruction.
- Some families prefer staggered vacation schedules.
- The calendar options more closely fit changing lifestyles and work patterns.
- The district incurs fewer capital costs.
- There are savings in insurance costs.

Cons

- Evidence that academic achievement improves with year-round education is inconclusive.
- Maintenance must be done at night and on weekends (all overtime).
- Some maintenance requires more than 15 to 20 days to be completed.
- At intermediate and high school grade levels, family disruptions may ensue.
- Teachers must pack and move everything after every session.
- Athletic scheduling and other activities (such as band) are a problem.
- Communication among staff and staff training are disrupted when 25 percent are absent at all times.
- Transportation costs may increase.
- Current facilities may not be designed for year-round education. Storage of materials is an on-site problem.
- There is increased placement of children in combination classes.
- There are increased administrative costs for designing schedules.
- Children jumping tracks cause a possible loss of community, identity, and scheduling problems.
- There are administrative costs to cover the principal's vacation.

- Having an educational calendar that is be facilities based is not recommended.
- Accommodating legislated school reform, such as extended school year and mandatory summer school, may be more difficult.

State Allocation Board's Year-Round Waiver Policy

A study of the feasibility to implement a multitrack year-round education program is no longer required by the School Facilities Program (SB 50).
Substantial Enrollment Requirement (SER) certification is granted when one of the following conditions are met:

- At least 30 percent of district pupils in kindergarten and grades one to six, inclusive, are enrolled in multitrack year-round education programs.
- At least 40 percent of district pupils in kindergarten and grades one to twelve, inclusive, in the high school attendance area are enrolled in multitrack year-round education programs. 3

Substantial Enrollment waivers may be granted according to the policy of the State Allocation Board, 4 when:

- A district's current K-6 enrollment shows 300 or fewer ADA or less.
- The number of 3/4 year students in the district is projected to be insufficient to load four classrooms at state loadings standards at each grade level from kindergarten to grade six.
- A high school district's current enrollment is less than 1,200.
- Students attending school in remote, isolated attendance areas are not included in the "substantial enrollment" evaluation.
- An education hardship would exist in the district by implementing multitrack year-round education.
- The district would suffer a financial hardship by having a substantial enrollment in multitrack year-round education programs and financial recovery status under Assembly Bill 1200. 5

Reduction of Eligibility
If an applicant school district is unable to meet the "substantial enrollment" threshold but has students in multitrack year-round education, it qualifies for a reduced "substantial enrollment" augmentation to the school district's existing student capacity. This lesser increase in existing student capacity is available under the following conditions:

- The governing board of the school district must request by resolution the reduction in the unhoused projected enrollment of less than the 6 percent or 8 percent in lieu of reductions required by State Allocation Board policy.
- The number of district or high school attendance area students in multitrack year-round education is subtracted from the threshold 30 percent or 40 percent "substantial enrollment" requirement for the school district or attendance area, and the difference is multiplied by 20 percent. This total becomes effective "substantial enrollment" in lieu of reduction in the year after the school board's resolution.
- This reduction is temporary. However, if the threshold "substantial enrollment" percentage is not attained in five years from the date of the first project approval after this partial reduction the reduction shall become permanent.
- Each request for a partial reduction of eligibility under this policy shall be approved by the State Allocation Board.

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Notes

1. "Investigating the effects of single-track year-round education on achievement of at-risk students." Carolyn Calvin Kneese et al. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Research Association, San Francisco, California April 18-22, 1995. "The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: a narrative and meta-analytic review." Harris, Cooper, et al. *Review of Educational Research*, (Fall 1996), Vol. 66, No. 3, 227-68.
2. The State Allocation Board provided a new cost savings per pupil figure of $1,283 and directed the Office of Public School Construction to present the report to the Legislature on November 18, 1998.
3. *Education Code* sections 17017.6 and 17017.7(c).
4. Amendment to the Substantial Enrollment Policy, May 27, 1992.
5. This particular provision is not found in State Allocation Board policy but only in *Education Code* Section 17017.5(e).

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Indiana University School of Education

Pros and Cons of Year-Round Education

Introduction

A traditional school calendar in the United States of America provides 180 days of instruction and a lengthy summer vacation. In efforts to raise achievement, reduce costs, or better serve their communities, many schools have altered the traditional school calendar. Year-round education (YRE) programs (also called modified calendars or balanced calendars) do not extend the amount of time students are in school, but rather distribute the 180 school days more evenly throughout the year. These schools may have voluntary enrichment, remediation, or acceleration opportunities during the "intercessions," or regular breaks. Approximately 3,000 schools that enrolled over two million students in the United States followed YRE schedules in 2007 (National Association for Year-Round Education, 2007). Given these figures and the use of YRE as a strategic mechanism to improve academic achievement, it is appropriate to characterize YRE as a reform effort. Therefore, it is equally appropriate to examine the extent to which this reform effort is associated with student outcomes including equity and academic achievement. This research brief unpacks the definition of Year-Round Education and then presents the current thinking and research about its adoption and impact on students, teachers, and families.

Defining Year-Round Education

Schools that adopt YRE are often classified as single-track or multi-track. In single-track schools, all students attend school at the same time and have the same two to three week intercessions. Single-track year-round education (ST-YRE) programs do not alleviate overcrowding, (Ready et al, 2004) a common rationale for adopting YRE. In a 2007 study of year-round schools, Evans noted that all of Indiana's ST-YRE programs have adopted alternative calendars because of academic concerns and public support for the plan (Evans, 2007). Multi-

track year-round education (MT-YRE) programs divide students into groups, then assign each group its own schedule. MT-YRE models are often used in overcrowded schools to avoid the cost of building new facilities. For example, Cooper et al (2003) estimated that 40% of schools switch to YRE to alleviate overcrowding or avoid new capital expenditures.

Student Achievement

Proponents of YRE schedules frequently argue that this is a mechanism for improving student achievement. The basic premise is that YRE will improve student retention, alleviating "summer learning loss" (Evans, 2007, p.17). There is long-standing research citing that more economically advantaged students tend to lose less, particularly in reading, after summer break as compared to less economically advantaged peers (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007; Cooper et al., 2003; Hayes & Grether, 1969; Heyns,1987). Literature related to summer learning loss indicates that students of low socio-economic status (SES) are more likely to be impacted by time away from school than their economically advantaged peers (Evans, 2007). In his analysis of standardized math test scores, Evans (2007) found that third grade students on free/reduced lunch and minority students in YRE programs performed better than students in the same categories who were enrolled in traditional calendar programs.

Research on year-round schools does not provide a clear consensus on the relationship between year-round schooling and student achievement. Studies that reported more robust effect sizes demonstrated gains among low-income students (McMillen, 2001) and/or upper elementary students (Palmer & Bemis, 1999). In a comprehensive review of three decades of research on year-round schooling and achievement, Palmer & Bemis (1999) concluded that "much of the empirical data regarding the effects of YRE on student achievement and other related outcomes suffers from poor research designs or incomplete data making it difficult to draw conclusions"

(p. 9). In a more recent meta-analysis of research conducted on YRE, Cooper et al (2003) noted that "weak research designs" prevent us from making "strong inferences about the effects of modified calendars" (p. 37). The overall effect size reported was positive but resided in the "trivial" range (p. 45). Similarly, the Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center (2004) characterized the available research on year-round schooling as "inconclusive" and "contradictory." It is noteworthy that even though YRE continued to grow in the first decade of the twenty-first century, there is scant research on its impact.

In addition to the relatively insignificant effect sizes reported in the research, studies tended not to distinguish between schools that extended the school year and did not offer intercession programs and those that provided education to a limited number of students during the intersession (Cooper et al, 2003). This is essential as intercessions may be a key mechanism that boosts student achievement. Evans (2007) showed positive test score gains amongst third graders in a ST-YRE program when compared to traditional schools with similar characteristics. Further he noted that "much of the rationale for year-round schooling hinges upon intersession times that enable teachers to target and remediate students throughout the year with short intensive developmental assistance" (p. 2). Byrd (2001) found that a shortened school year with an added intercession period for low-achieving students enhanced both overall student achievement and achievement among economically disadvantaged students. Unfortunately, very little peer-reviewed research is available on the use of intercessions in YRE. Without more research in this area, it is difficult to predict how students will respond to intercession opportunities as compared to traditional summer school or other remediation and enrichment opportunities.

In contrast to ST-YRE programs, two recent studies of MT-YRE schools in California reported negative effects on student achievement (Graves, 2009; Mitchell & Mitchell, 2005). Mitchell and Mitchell (2005) found widespread use of ability tracking in MT-YRE and warned that dividing groups of students according to ability was akin to promoting academic inequalities, limiting some students "access to high-achieving classmates, experienced and qualified teachers, and enriched curricular opportunities" (p. 550).

Economic Impact

A motivating force behind the adoption of YRE programs is to make better use of school facilities that would normally be dormant for 3-4 months a year on a traditional schedule (Glines, 1997; Orellana &Thorne, 1998). By implementing MT-YRE, districts can close older buildings without the additional cost of renovation or new construction (Glines, 1997), alleviating overcrowding while cutting expenditures (Ready et al, 2004). However, the financial savings of MT-YRE programs may come with an academic cost to students. A 2009 study noted that while cost-savings to MT-YRE schools may be "in the range of 5–15%,"there is "a trade-off in terms of academic achievement of roughly 1–2 national percentile rank points" (Graves, 2009, p. 390).

ST-YRE schools have not generated significant cost savings because they do not reduce class sizes or enroll more students (Evans, 2007; Orellana & Thorne, 1998; Ready et al, 2004). However, the cost of building operations (such as heating and cooling expenses) associated with the change to year-round schooling may lead to changes in expenditures. In fact, cost increases are more likely in year-round schools that operate at full capacity in summer months or provide instruction during intercessions (Evans, 2007).

Teacher, Parent, and Student Behaviors and Attitudes Regarding YRE

Most families and school personnel appreciated some aspects of YRE after they had time to adjust to the change. One researcher noted, "It is clear that the students, parents, and staff that participate in modified calendar programs are overwhelmingly positive about the experience" (Cooper et al, 2003, p. 43). Teacher perceptions generally appear to grow more positive over time (Palmer & Bemis, 1999). However, similar concerns regarding research design in these studies raise questions about the reliability of the findings. YRE does not appear to have a consistent impact on student or teacher absenteeism. In a review of twelve empirical studies examining student attendance, only one found significantly higher rates of attendance, while the others showed non-significant differences in both directions (Palmer & Bemis, 1999). Five of six studies showed evidence of decreased teacher absences, but only two of these tested for statistical significance (Palmer & Bemis, 1999).

Initial parent and teacher concerns were noted in several studies. Parents found it difficult to arrange childcare during intercessions and reported difficulty coordinating the schedules of their other children who attended schools with traditional calendars (Graves, 2009; Orellana & Thorne, 1998). In addition, teachers found it more difficult to schedule professional development without a large block of time in the summer (Palmer & Bemis, 1999). Businesses expressed concern over the loss of teenage labor during the summer and/or summer travel dollars. In fact, the travel and tourism industries have lobbied against YRE in some locations (Evans, 2007).

Demographics

Intersession activities are a feature of year-rounds schools that appear to benefit students (Ballinger, 1995; McMillen, 2001), but racial and cultural factors impact student participation. Hood and Freeman (2000) found that "African American, Hispanic, and Native American

students were more likely to participate in intersession offerings than White or Asian American students" (p. 359). African American and Hispanic students were more likely to participate in remediation activities (p.354), while White students were more likely to take advantage of "acceleration" and "enrichment" options (p. 355).

In California, most of the year-round schools are MT-YRE programs in urban areas where minority students and English Language Learners reside (Graves, 2009; Orellana & Thorne, 1998). The MT-YRE program studied by Orellana and Thorne divided students into three tracks using geographic location and language groupings (1998). Tracking students according to their culture of origin and geographic location contributed to a "process of racialization" (p. 456), and contributed to parent perceptions that some tracks were "more advanced" than others (p. 457). Color coding of tracks (i.e. labeling them blue, red, or green) further contributed to stakeholder perceptions that ethnicity impacted educational opportunities (Orellana & Thorne, 1998).

Studies did not consistently report on the demographics of families who opt into year-round programs where districts offer YRE as choice. It is not clear how students were selected to participate, and self-selection might influence results (McMillen, 2001).

Conclusion

The research regarding YRE is inconclusive and it is clear that redistributing the 180-day school year without making other changes cannot be expected to provide long-term gains in students' achievement. As Silva (2007) stated, "time's potential as a reform depends largely on whether the time is used effectively and on its use as a resource to serve students most in need of extra learning opportunities, both inside and outside of school" (p. 9). If schools are able to increase or improve engaged learning experiences through sound pedagogical practice along

with the addition of enriching intercessions, it is possible to have a positive impact on student achievement (Metzger, 2003). Further research is needed to examine the extent to which YRE reforms are associated with positive student outcomes, the reason for their impact, and professional development practices that address the challenges of the transition for students, teachers, and families.

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Year-Round Schooling

The beginning of a three-month break from school seems to be as much a harbinger of summer as barbecues and beach vacations. But, according to the National Association for Year-Round Education, more than 2.3 million U.S. public school students attended year-round schools in the 2002-03 school year. The number has steadily grown since the 1986-87 school year, when only about 360,000 students were enrolled in year-round schools. NAYRE also reports that 3,181 public schools now function year round, compared with 408 schools in 1986-87.

Year-round schooling generates strong feelings, both positive and negative. A 1994 report, "Prisoners of Time," released by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning, argued that a departure from the traditional school calendar could better meet the needs of contemporary society and result in increased student achievement. Groups like NAYRE push for a movement away from the traditional calendar that they see as rooted in economic, instead of educational, concerns. But other groups, such as Summer Matters, believe just as strongly that the traditional calendar is best. Summer Matters contends that year-round schooling is disruptive to family life, provides little or no academic benefit, and impedes different kinds of learning that children often experience on their summer breaks. Proponents and opponents both point to research to support their respective views. The research, however, is spotty and often poorly designed.

Unlike their peers in schools with traditional schedules, students in year-round schools do not have a long summer vacation. To complicate matters, in some of those schools, not all students are on year-round schedules. A number of schools and districts allow parents to choose their children's schedules. So while some schools are completely year-round,

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others have one group of students on a traditional calendar with another group of students on a year-round schedule.

Most often, year-round schooling is not an extension of the school year, but, rather, a reorganization of it. The summer break is usually broken up and redistributed throughout the year in relatively regular intervals. Sometimes, however, schools with extended-year calendars, in which students attend for more than the traditional 180 days, are lumped into the definition of year-round schools.

More than 2.3 million U.S. public school students attended year-round schools in the 2002-03 school year.
National Association for Year-Round Education

Multi-track year-round schooling is a specific type of year-round education with the primary purpose of alleviating overcrowding in schools. In this system, students and teachers are divided into groups, or tracks, of about the same size. Each track follows its own schedule, so that one track is on vacation while the others are in school. According to NAYRE, implementing a four-track system increases the capacity of a school by 33 percent. Research shows that multi-track year-round schooling can significantly save money if it is used in place of building costly new school facilities (Shields & Oberg, 2000; Bradford, 1995; Brekke, 1992).

Unfortunately, research that attempts to measure the influence of year-round education on student achievement is inconclusive and contradictory. Reviews of the existing literature on this subject generally contend that the achievement of children in year-round schools is as good as, or slightly better than, that of their peers in traditional schools (Palmer & Bemis, 1999; Kneese, 1996). However, a number of recent studies have found no significant connection between year-round schooling and improved student achievement. For example, a review of 39 studies found that modified school calendars have a very small, insignificant, effect on achievement (Cooper, et al., 2003). But the review also states that the students, parents, and staff that participate in year-round schools are quite positive about the experience.

One longitudinal study of six elementary schools, three on traditional calendars and three on year-round schedules, discovered positive effects of year-round education. It found that, in most cases, the sample of students in the year-round schools posted overall test-score increases that were higher than those of their traditionally schooled counterparts (Kneese, 2000).

A recent report from NAYRE analyzed Advanced Placement Index scores for California traditional and year-round public schools. While the study found that schools with year-round calendars did not score as high as those with traditional calendars, it also found

that, over time, there was greater progress in schools with certain kinds of year-round calendars (Stenvall & Stenvall, 2001).

Bradley McMillan, from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, examined achievement differences between year-round and traditional-calendar students using data for more than 345,000 North Carolina public school students. He found that achievement in year-round schools was no higher than in traditional schools (2001). A much smaller study compared the mathematics performance of 44 students in 5th and 6th grades on a year-round track with that of 40 students on a traditional track in the same school. Again, there were no significant achievement differences between the groups (Ferguson, 1999).

Some research contends that year-round schools can have more positive effects on students who are deemed at risk for academic problems, such as children from low-income families or other students who might typically be low performers in school (Cooper, et al., 2003). A 1994 study of three year-round California elementary schools showed that each of the three schools demonstrated significant achievement gains for its highly targeted at-risk students, including low-performing students and English-language learners (Gandara & Fish, 1994). The results should be interpreted with caution, though, because the schools added instructional days to the calendar, and the year-round initiatives also resulted in lower class sizes.

Even less research has been done on why year-round schools appear to be beneficial for some students. The common belief is that a three-month summer break contributes to students' forgetting what they have learned the previous year. The result is that teachers need to review material at the start of the next school year, wasting valuable instructional time. A review of 39 studies confirmed that summertime learning loss, specifically indicating that student test scores drop over summer vacation and that mathematics performance deteriorates more than reading performance (Cooper, et al., 1996).

Others believe that year-round schooling boosts performance because the more frequent but shorter breaks allow struggling students extra time for remedial help (Ballinger, 1995).

Despite a lack of conclusive evidence showing that year-round schooling is able to dramatically raise student achievement, the approach is becoming an attractive strategy for more and more schools and districts. In 2002, 18 states had policies regarding year-round schools (Potts, Blank & Williams), and NAYRE reports a 441 percent growth since the mid-1980s in the number of students receiving a year-round education.

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